

Chapter 10. FICTIVE QUESTIONS IN CONDITIONALS? SYNCHRONIC AND DIACHRONIC EVIDENCE FROM GERMAN AND ENGLISH

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This chapter discusses the alleged emergence of verb-first (V1) conditionals in English and German from question-driven fictive interaction of the type *A: p?* (*B: Yes.*) *A: Then q.* Since this scenario proves impossible to maintain with regard to English, an alternative model is proposed treating V1 as the grammaticalized residue of a stage in ancient Germanic at which word-order options were determined pragmatically instead of syntactically. The chapter shows that the conversational frame left its mark on V1-conditionals indirectly through the period as a rhetorical discourse unit in which V1 emerged as a marker of conditionality. This happened in different ways linked in part to the divergence of word-order systems between English and German.

Keywords. Germanic, grammaticalization, verb-first conditionals, rhetorical discourse unit

*Comes love, nothing can be done.*¹

¹Lew Brown / Sammy H. Stept / Charles Tobias, “Comes Love (Nothing Can Be Done)”, sung by Diane Reeves (lyrics available at http://www.lyricsfreak.com/d/dianne+reeves/comes+love+nothing+can+be+done_20818459.html); with thanks to Sergei Sandler (p.c.). Cf. also footnote 6 below.

1. Introduction

As Pascual writes in her seminal book on *Fictive Interaction*, “[u]sing a question-answer structure for organizing discourse is extremely common across different languages and discourse genres” (2014, p. 32, see also Jarque, this volume). A simple example is the monologic use of dialogic patterns to invoke conditionality in English as in (1) (ibid.):

- (1) *Do you have any questions?* Call us!
‘If you have any questions, call us!’

Slightly more complex are sequences like those in (2) in which a constituent question is posed and immediately answered by the same speaker as part of his/her own monologic discourse (example from Herring 1991, p. 265):

- (2) *And so what happens to the girl?* She gets pregnant, the girl.

Both (1) and (2) mimic “schematized interactive frames” (Langacker 1999, p. 90), with the question constituting a “virtual” or “fictive” speech act with “fictive illocutionary force” (ibid.). Still, the sequences clearly form two distinct practices. (2) represents a straightforward adjacency pair (Levinson 1983, pp. 303–308): the speaker poses a wh-question, briefly

enacting² the part, or speaking in the voice, of the questioner, which s/he then answers her-/himself. In (1), by contrast, the question is polar and the answer (in the affirmative) is only implied, hence the whole does not strictly speaking constitute a “question-answer structure” or “question-answer pattern”, as Pascual suggests (2014, p. 31f.). Instead, the proto-apodosis (“Call us!”) of the conditional represents the same voice that asked the question, and the second voice remains silent in acquiescence.

It is in terms of (1) that Jespersen (1940, p. 374) and others (e.g. Haiman 1978, with more references) explain the form and rise of conditionals in languages like English and German, which have a protasis with the verb in initial position:

- (3) a. A: Is he coming? (– B: Yes. –) Well, then I will stay.
 > *Is he coming*, (then) I will stay.
 b. A: Kommt er? (– B: Ja. –) Gut, dann bleibe ich.
 > *Kommt er*, (dann) bleibe ich.

Since interrogatives are recruited as markers of conditionality across the languages of the world (Traugott 1985), including many signed ones (Pascual 2014, p. 36f.; Jarque, this volume), (3) is a highly plausible

² Sandler (2012) speaks of the “reenactment” of linguistic action routines. Note, however, that the local motivation for any fictive ‘re-’enactment may well be anticipatory, pre-empting a potential challenge by the interlocutor to the speaker’s hold of the floor (Popovici 1981).

scenario in view of the well-known functional overlap between conditional protases and polar interrogatives (Haiman 1978; Traugott 1985; Podlesskaya 2001; Dancygier and Sweetser 2005). Thanks to (3), we can account for verb-first (henceforth: V1) conditionals in Germanic³ on the basis of question-driven dialogue patterns as in (4), taken from a novel in the *Deutsches Referenzkorpus* (DeReKo):

- (4) “Ist dir das klar?” – “Ja, Zellervater.” – “Dann unterschreib, was ich hier aufgesetzt hab!”
 ‘Is that clear to you?’ – ‘Yes, Zellervater’ – ‘Then sign what I have drawn up here!’

(DeReKo: MK1/TJM; Van den Nest 2010, p. 191)

The difference is that the affirmative is represented as an audible conversational turn in (4), whereas it is tacit in the transitional varieties – either voluntarily or (in the printed medium) necessarily so. Jespersen (1940, p. 374) cites example (5a) from the King James Bible for illustration; the German example (5b) is from the same period:

- (5) a. *Art thou bound vnto a wife? seek not to bee loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seeke not a wife.* (1 Cor. 7,27; transl. compl. 1611)

³ Except in Gothic, the only Germanic language without attested V1-conditionals.

b. *Heuchelstu nicht mit? so wird man Deiner wenig achten; Heuchelstu aber, vnnd thust auch also? Ach was hertzquelens mustu leiden.*

‘Are you not pretending (lit.: Pretend-you not) along with everyone else? Then people will give you little respect. Are you pretending (lit.: Pretend-you), on the other hand, and playing along? Oh what pain at heart you have to suffer.’

(Moscherosch, *Gesichte*, 1650; cited in Van den Nest 2010, p. 239)

Like (1) above, (5a) and (5b) represent transitional proto-conditionals and also fictive interaction in the sense of Pascual (2002, 2014) – a term which must not, of course, be confused with “fictional” (cf. Xiang, this volume). The interaction in (4) is fictional, but it is not fictive.

In keeping with the data discussed above, the present chapter starts from the working assumption that V1-conditionals form the grammar end of a range of forms spanning real interaction, proto-conditionals in fictive interaction, and complex sentences in grammar (p_{V1} = V1 structure expressing the conditional antecedent p):

- (6) a. A: p_{V1} ? – B: Yes. – A: Then q.
 b. A: p_{V1} ? Then q. (fictive interaction)
 c. A: p_{V1} , (then) q.

Based on (6), I will trace the emergence of ‘fictive interaction’-type proto-conditionals from discourse in German in §2, followed by a comparison with English (based largely on Van den Nest 2010 and

Leuschner and Van den Nest 2015). As it turns out, English V1-conditionals are not emergent in the same way as their German counterparts; the question therefore arises how (3) can be maintained as a shared scenario for the rise of V1-conditionals in both languages, and as in section §3 shows, this dilemma is confirmed by Van den Nest's (2010) historical-contrastive investigation. In §4, I will therefore discuss an alternative account in which V1 protases and V1-interrogatives are treated, not as one arising from the other, but as separate, now grammaticalized, residues of a stage in ancient Germanic at which V1 was still one of several pragmatically determined word-order options. As a result, we should abandon the idea that V1-conditionals in Germanic arose directly from a situated turn-taking pattern as suggested by (3), but we gain a more realistic picture of the conditions under which V1-conditionals were formed in two languages with a shared ancestry but also divergent later histories.

2. The Synchronic Perspective

2.1. German V1-Conditionals as Emergent Grammar

In describing V1-conditionals in this section as “emergent”, I adopt a distinction proposed by Hopper (2011) between “emergent” and “emerging” to describe linguistic structures that are, respectively, being (co-)produced by speakers in live interaction (“emergent”) and engaged in a process of

grammaticalization (“emerging”). That conditionals may be both emergent and emerging in this sense is well known (see e.g. De Castro Campos 1985, with explicit reference to Jespersen 1940). The following excerpts from the FOLK corpus of spoken German (part of the *Datenbank Gesprochenes Deutsch*, DGD, version 2.0) similarly show emergent conditionality in semi-dialectal German conversation. In (7), recorded during a card game, NI asks a polar V1-question, which is immediately answered in the affirmative by his three companions. Taking the proposition from his first turn as antecedent, NI then announces he is raising the stakes in the game, beginning with the deictic adverb *dann* ‘then’:

- | | | | |
|-----|------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| (7) | NI: | simmer jetzt bei sieben | ‘Are we at seven now?’ |
| | XM1: | genau | ‘Exactly’ |
| | SK: | ja | ‘Yes’ |
| | DK: | bei sieben | ‘At seven’ |
| | NI: | <i>dann</i> sag ich sieben fünf | ‘ <u>Then</u> I say seven and a half’ |
- (DGD2: FOLK_00021)

Very similar sequences show up in more condensed form in the spoken and written data collected by Van den Nest (2010) from the DGD and the tagged TEI-subcorpus of the *Deutsches Referenzkorpus* (DeReKo). Extract (8) is from a conversation in which the speaker is interviewing the interlocutor about his recent reading, (9) is from a newspaper:

- (8) Können Sie sich noch daran erinnern? *Dann* beschreiben Sie mal den Inhalt.

‘Can you still remember it? Describe the content, then.’

(DGD2: ZW4G9; Van den Nest 2010, p. 192)

- (9) Frönen auch Sie einer besonderen Sammelleidenschaft? *Dann* schreiben Sie uns!

‘Are you a passionate collector of something unusual, too? Drop us a line, then!’

(DeReKo: MMM/506; *ibid*, p. 193)

In (8), antecedent and consequent are uttered by the same speaker; (9) is the fictive interaction version of the same pattern in the printed medium. Note that both examples have an imperative as proto-apodosis, demonstrating the role of fictive interaction as a strategy for perlocutionary effects that involve action by the addressee.

In (10), finally, two alternative antecedents are raised, each followed immediately by its own consequent. Whereas the first antecedent is phrased as a V1 subordinate clause, the second (linked to the preceding sentence by *oder* ‘or’) is phrased as a polar interrogative:

- (10) Nun muß man sich fragen, was die ORF-Redaktion zu einem solchen Unfug verführt hat. War es Ignoranz, dann hätte die Volksausgabe eines gängigen Lexikons genügt, Abhilfe zu schaffen. Oder war es der kurzbeinige Versuch, das tägliche ORF-Antifaschismus-Plansoll zu erfüllen? Dann sollten die Genossen Mitarbeiter in die Antifa-Oberschule [...].

Lit. ‘Now one may wonder what deluded the ORF’s [= Austrian Public Broadcaster] editors into such nonsense. *Was it ignorance*, then the popular edition of any current encyclopedia could have helped out. Or *was it a naive attempt at the ORF’s daily dose of dutiful anti-faschism?* Then the colleagues-alias-comrades should attend advanced Antifaschism School.’

(DeReKo: P95/JUL)

Here, the polar interrogative prompts the addressee into making an extra cognitive effort to set up an alternative possible world or mental space that is incompatible with the one established previously. Example (10) thus shows particularly clearly how easily the V1 structure can be moulded into a protasis or an interrogative even within a short stretch of text, depending on which format best suits their momentary communicative needs.

2.2. Comparison with English

The previous subsection suggests that proto-conditionals with V1 in German emerge, by way of increased condensation and across different media, from a question-driven discourse pattern in which propositions are linked (potentially across different turns and speakers) by the adverb *dann* ‘then’. They thus represent both ends, as well as a cline of variation between them, of the basic schema of “grammaticalization across clauses” as proposed by Hopper and Traugott (1993, p. 169, slightly adapted):

- (11) a. S1 <=> S2 b.
- / \
- S1 S2

In the less grammaticalized version (11a), the arrow \Leftrightarrow represents the “mutual relevance” of two independent sentences S1 and S2 that are routinely produced together as part of certain “rhetorical production strategies” in discourse (Hopper and Traugott 1993, p. 169, 2003, p. 177); question-driven fictive interaction is clearly such a strategy. In the more grammaticalized version (11b), S2 is the main clause in a complex sentence construction S in which s1 forms the subordinate clause. In (12) below, (12a) repeats a fictive-interaction proto-conditional, and (12b) and (12c) represent two equivalent, more strongly grammaticalized versions, respectively as a V1-conditional and a conditional with *wenn* (‘if’). The former is diachronically related to the proto-conditional, the latter is not:

- (12) a. (fictive interaction:) *Wollen Sie mehr als nur einen unverbindlichen Flirt?* Dann müssen Sie die entsprechenden Signale setzen.
'*Do you want (lit.: Want you) more than just a casual flirt?* Then you should set the right signals.'
- b. (V1-conditional:) *Wollen Sie mehr als nur einen unverbindlichen Flirt, (dann) müssen Sie die entsprechenden Signale setzen.*
'*If you want (lit.: Want you) more than just a casual flirt, (then) you should set the right signals.*'
- c. (*wenn*-conditional:) *Wenn Sie mehr als nur einen unverbindlichen Flirt wollen, (dann) müssen Sie die entsprechenden Signale setzen.*

‘If you want more than just a casual flirt, (then) you should set the right signals.’

The difference between a. and b. may seem slight at first sight, yet there are clear arguments in favour of a more grammaticalized status for at least some V1-conditionals. Note for example the brackets around *dann* in (14b) and (14c): although V1 and *wenn*-conditionals may both have an apodosis beginning with *dann* (or *so*, cf. below), this adverb may be omitted so that the apodosis begins immediately with the finite verb, implying greater integration of the protasis into the forefield of the apodosis verb and an on-going process of grammaticalization (König and van der Auwera 1988; Van den Nest 2010, pp. 143–178).⁴

A strong hint that V1-conditionals have emerged far enough into grammar to be regarded as a grammaticalized construction in their own right are the ability for the protasis to appear sentence-finally and the use of mood. Example (13) shows the V1-clause used in a way that is typical of subordinate clauses and no longer compatible with any underlying question-driven discourse pattern (Van den Nest 2010, p. 67):

(13) Der Artikel würde zu umfangreich, *wollten* wir alle Details behandeln.

⁴ There is considerable debate over these and other syntactic aspects of V1-conditionals in German both synchronically and diachronically, mainly in a generativist framework, which will be left aside here. Axel and Wöllstein (2009) is a prominent contribution written in English.

‘The article would become too long, were we (lit.: wanted we) to discuss all the details.’

(Helbig 1983, p. 161)

The examples in (14) below show another strong indicator of grammaticalization, viz. the use of the subjunctive to convey potentials and irrealis relationships (or “tentative” and “counterfactual”, as they are often called in English, see e.g. Quirk et al. 1985) as opposed to realis (“neutral”) ones.⁵ Any protasis verb can be used in this way (Van den Nest 2010, pp. 109–111 cites examples with *stünde* ‘would.stand.3SG’, *kämen* ‘would.come. 3PL’, *könnte* ‘could.SBJ.3SG’, *gelänge* ‘would.succeed.3SG’, amongst others), but we will let *sollte* ‘should’, *hätte* ‘had’ and *wäre* ‘were’ stand in for them all (examples from Van den Nest 2010, p. 110f.; note the lack of *dann* in all three cases):

- (14) a. Sollte sich das Gegenteil erweisen, hätte dies für Klimmt höchst unangenehme Folgen.
‘Should the opposite prove to be the case, this would have extremely unpleasant consequences for Klimmt.’

⁵ This phenomenon is known as “sequence of tenses” in English (cf. “probability readings” in Van den Nest 2010), and it applies only in conditionals with clause-linkage at the content level, not with epistemic- and illocutionary-level linkage (Sweetser 1990). Since the content level is the predominant linkage level with V1-conditionals in both English and German (Van den Nest 2010; Leuschner and Van den Nest 2015), I focus exclusively on content-level linkage for reasons of space.

(DeReKo: S94/H03)

- b. Hätte ich gewußt, daß es die letzte ist, wäre ich gerne gekommen.

‘Had I known it was the last one, I would gladly have come.’

(De ReKo: S93/H20)

- c. Wäre auch sie hochgegangen, hätte es, wie Experten später errechneten, allen den Rest gegeben.

‘Had (lit.: Were) it exploded, too, it would have killed off everyone, the experts calculated later.’

(DeReKo: S94/H23)

It is at this point that comparison with English becomes relevant. After all, *sollte*, *hätte* and *wäre* are the German cognates of the forms *should*, *had* and *were*, as partly suggested by the paraphrases above. As Van den Nest (2010, pp. 22–34) found, these are the only verb forms that introduce English V1-protases in the entire BNC. It is in part because of this restriction on their formal variability and productivity that V1-conditionals in English are not emergent in the way of their German counterparts.⁶ In (15), version b. is ungrammatical, and only b’., i.e. with *should*, is acceptable:

⁶ The song lyric “Comes love, nothing can be done”, cited as the motto of the present chapter, is probably a deliberate violation of this rule. If anything, it shows that V1 remains interpretable as a conditional marker despite the violation (Sergeiy Sandler, p.c.), presumably on the basis of a common functional core of “non-indicativeness” shared by different V1 constructions in English (see Chen 2013 from a construction-grammar point of view, with references; cf. also Kim 2011).

- (15) a. (fictive interaction:) *Are you looking for more than just a casual flirt?* Then you should set the right signals.
- b. *(V1-conditional:) *Are you looking for more than just a casual flirt,* you should set the right signals.
- b'. (V1-conditional with *should*;) *Should you be looking for more than just a casual flirt,* you should set the right signals.
- c. (if-conditional:) If you are looking for more than just a casual flirt, you should set the right signals.

Note also the sharp difference in meaning between *should*, and indeed also *had* and *were*, in V1-protases and polar interrogatives. In (15b'), repeated as (16a) below, *should* in the protasis has a special reading which only occurs in protases, not interrogatives, and is clearly distinct from the deontic reading of *should* in the apodosis. In polar interrogatives the special reading disappears, and *should* then has the deontic sense of 'ought to' (the same that *should* has in the apodosis); German *sollte* has an analogous distinction:

- (16) a. *Should*_{cond} you be looking for more than just a casual flirt, you *should*_{deon} set the right signals.
- b. *Should*_{deon} you be looking for a casual flirt?

Had, too, differs semantically between protases and interrogatives: in the former it normally expresses counterfactuality (or at least tentativity), whereas in the latter it marks the pluperfect (Van den Nest 2010; see also Leuschner and Van den Nest 2015). English V1-conditionals therefore

cannot synchronically be regarded as the more grammaticalized versions of any proto-conditionals involving polar interrogatives along the lines of (3) and (6), as demonstrated for their German counterparts earlier.

One major factor which brings this about is lack of lexical overlap: since V1 structures are formed with far fewer verbs in English than in German (e.g. no main verbs), V1-conditionals are that much less productive (and frequent, cf. below) in English. However, since only modal and auxiliary verbs (including *do*) are available to form polar interrogatives in English anyway, the truly decisive issue is why V1-conditionals are ungrammatical with forms like *are* in (16b), which routinely occur in polar interrogatives. There is clearly a construction-specific constraint at work here, viz. specialization. As Van den Nest (2010, pp. 118–124) shows on the basis of data from the BNC, English V1-conditionals more or less form a non-neutrality niche within the functional domain of conditionality, and as users of English seem to prefer them robustly over *if*-conditionals for the actual expression of non-neutrality, it is no wonder that they seem designed to signal precisely this niche (apparently with as little semantic weight as possible, whence the exclusion of other non-neutrality forms like *could* and *might*).⁷ Divergence from interrogatives through lack of lexical overlap thus

⁷ V1-conditionals also display content-level linkage (cf. footnote 5) significantly more often than *if*-/wenn-conditionals, but this does not amount to near-complementarity (Van den Nest 2010, pp. 38–44).

goes hand in hand with specialization for non-neutrality in defining the crucial distinction between V1-conditionals in German and English.

Interestingly, *should* forms an exception to this tendency. The vast majority of V1-protases with *should* combine with an apodosis in the present or future tense, as in (17), instead of the *would*-forms required for non-neutrality, and so do V1-protases with *sollte* in German (Nieuwint 1989; Van den Nest 2010; Leuschner and Van den Nest 2015):

- (17) *Should* the path fail then the system *backtracks* to the previous decision point and *takes* a different path.

(BNC: HGR)

Note that the whole conditional gets a neutrality (i.e. realis) reading, as shown by examples like (18) which contain two coordinated protases. The first has V1-*should* and the second (with main clause word order) has a verb in the present indicative as in the apodosis:

- (18) *Should* the problem persist, or you *cannot* contact the Area Manager, the Regional Management Centre is the next point of contact for your complaint.

(BNC: EE0)

Strikingly, such combinations are almost two and a half times as frequent as *should*-protases combined with *would*-apodoses in English and almost twice as frequent than *sollte*-protases combined with apodoses with

würde or the past subjunctive in German (Van den Nest 2010, p. 135). Clearly, speakers no longer process *should* in conditionals in paradigmatic opposition to present *shall* (nor correspondingly *sollte* in opposition to *soll* in German). The total picture is therefore somewhat paradoxical: while users of English treat V1-conditionals as their preferred format for non-neutrality, they nonetheless take the opportunity on a large scale to form neutrality V1-conditionals with *should*.

3. The Diachronic Perspective

3.1. Testing the Asynchronicity Assumption

Given the results of the preceding discussion, the question arises how (3) can be maintained as a viable scenario for the diachronic origins of V1-conditionals. A useful auxiliary hypothesis in this context is a proposal by König (2012) which I will call the “Asynchronicity Assumption”. It starts from the premiss that V1-conditionals did indeed originate from polar interrogatives in English and German and then followed the same grammaticalization path in both languages, while doing so much faster in English than in German (König 2012, p. 8-9). To substantiate this proposal, König (ibid.) points to an asymmetry in the use of German V1-conditionals that suggests an unexpected resemblance with their English counterparts: according to his anecdotal evidence, German V1-protases tend to use *hätte*,

sollte and *wäre* (i.e. the cognates of *had*, *should* and *were*), to a greater extent than polar interrogatives. This claim is precisely confirmed by Van den Nest (2010, pp. 22–33, cf. Leuschner and Van den Nest 2015): in the tagged TEI-subcorpus of the DeReKo, past-subjunctive verb forms, specifically *hätte*, *sollte* and *wäre*, occur significantly more than in either polar interrogatives or *wenn*-conditionals. To give an example: 3rd person singular *sollte* is the most frequent single verb form in German V1-conditionals at 16.5%, but marginal in polar interrogatives at just 1.2%, and similar, statistically highly significant ratios hold for *hätte* and *wäre*.⁸ Even in German, therefore, V1-protases diverge from interrogatives and specialize for non-neutrality – though not nearly to the same extent as in English, of course.

These figures suggest that the synchronic observations discussed in §2 can be diachronically dynamicized by dynamicizing the very notions of “divergence” and “specialization” – very much in the spirit of Hopper (1991), who lists both as parameters of grammaticalization. The guiding methodological precept is König’s statement (2012, p. 5) that “[a] contrastive analysis will [...] often resemble a description of contrasts

⁸ Note that the divergence is not due to the more interactive nature of interrogatives. The latter could conceivably encourage, for example, second-person *solltest* ‘you should’ to be more frequent than *sollte* in interrogatives as opposed to V1-protases, but that is not the case: third-person *sollte* is the most frequent inflectional variant of *sollte* in both clause types.

between two consecutive stages in the historical development of two languages”. Phrased as a working hypothesis, divergence would imply that the finite verbs used in the protasis in English have increasingly been diverging from those used in polar interrogatives throughout the history of V1-conditionals, and have been doing so more slowly and less thoroughly, if at all, in German; specialization in turn would imply that V1-conditionals have increasingly been specializing for non-neutral conditionality in both English and German and that they have been doing so more slowly and less thoroughly in German than in English. Anecdotal confirmation of both hypotheses comes from pairs of examples as in (19). Present-day German V1-conditionals allow main verbs like *kommen* ‘come’ in their protasis, and there are examples from late Middle English which do the same:

- (19) a. *Kommst du heute nicht*, kommst du morgen. (proverb)
 ‘If you don’t come (lit.: *Come you not*) today, you [can always] come tomorrow’.
- b. *Come ye not* [...] , it shal coste you your lyf. (Caxton, *Reynard the Fox*; quoted from Van den Nest 2010, p. 290)

A third parameter of comparison is text frequency. Even though the corpora used by Van den Nest (2010) for English (the BNC) and German (the tagged TEI-subcorpus of the DeReKo) are not strictly comparable, the discrepancy in text frequency between V1-conditionals in both languages is suggestive: the share of V1-conditionals of all sentential units in the BNC is

0.0255% as opposed to 0.2417% in the German TEI-subcorpus, yielding a ratio of roughly 1:10 in favor of German (ibid, p. 33). Given the Asynchronicity Assumption, one might therefore expect V1-conditionals to start out in Old English at about the same text frequency as in present-day German and then to become more rare in English until reaching the current share.

This kind of reasoning is of course blatantly teleological, and one cannot emphasize enough its heuristic purpose: to produce working hypotheses that can be tested against actual data. A useful example is the frequency argument developed in the previous paragraph. Like the modern corpora, the corpora used by Van den Nest for Old English and Old High German are not strictly comparable: for English, he consulted the York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose (YCOE), which contains 100 prose texts or ca. 75% of the textual record, whereas he investigated in detail only two major Old High German texts, viz. Otfrid's *Evangelienbuch* and Notker's *Consolatio philosophiae* (after also checking several shorter texts). Yet, the results are again striking: while there are 143 V1-conditionals in the two German texts alone, there are only 28 in the entire YCOE as compared to 346 conditionals introduced by *gif* (the Old English form of *if*), with 85 of the 100 texts containing no V1-conditionals at all (Van den Nest 2010, p. 223). Interestingly, the share of V1-conditionals of all sentential units in the YCOE amounts to 0.0254%, almost exactly the same as the 0.0255% in the present-day BNC (ibid.). The

working hypothesis that V1-conditionals would turn out to be about as frequent in Old English as in present-day German (i.e. ca. ten times more frequent) and then to become less frequent later is thus clearly disproved.

As for divergence, the data seem at first sight to offer consolation: V1-conditionals clearly did resemble polar interrogatives more in earlier English than later in terms of lexical overlap (Van den Nest 2010). (20) shows examples of main verbs in V1-protases from Old English (YCOE, cf. above), and from Middle English (PPCE = Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpora of Historical English; cited from Van den Nest 2010, pp. 280, 290f.):

- (20) a. *Fulga* nu se mete ðære wambe willan, & sio wamb ðæs metes,
ðonne towyrpð God ægðer.

‘If the food now follow.SUBJ (lit.: Follow.SUBJ the food now) the will of the belly and the belly that of the food, God annihilates both’.
(YCOE: *Cura Pastoralis*, late 9th c.)

- b. *Do þu* hit eanes awei; ne schalt tu neauer nan oðer swuch acourin
‘If you get rid of it once (lit. Do thou it once away), you will never (re)gain anything like it’.

(PPCME2: *Hali Meidhad*, c. 1225)

- c. *Deceyueth* me the foxe / so haue I ylle lerned my casus.

‘If the fox deceives me (lit. Deceiveth me the fox), I have learned my lesson badly’.

(PPCME2: Caxton’s *History of Reynard the Fox*, 1481)

As for specialization, Van den Nest’s data (2010, pp. 224–315) show a sharp increase in the share of non-neutrality, from 44.4% in Old English to 93.2% in Early Modern English – with a slight retreat later as combinations

of *should*-protases with non-past apodoses for neutrality readings took hold. In German, the rise of combinations of *sollte*-protases with indicative apodoses had a similar effect, but the overall trend was much less pronounced, though nonetheless palpable and, from Middle to Early Modern German, statistically significant. The picture painted by König (2012) of their overall historical development is therefore essentially correct, as V1-conditionals in both languages share some trends which, however, are much more pronounced and taken much further in English than in German.

An aspect of König's account that is unexpectedly refuted, on the other hand, is the assumed shared origin of V1-protases in polar interrogatives in both languages (cf. Auer and Lindström 2011; Hilpert 2010). Text frequency, as discussed above, is only indirectly relevant to this issue, but there are other observations that contradict the traditional view. One is the fact that non-neutrality readings are already much more predominant in Old English (44.4%) than in Old High German (17.5%; Van den Nest 2010, pp. 302–315); hence, divergence from polar interrogatives is clearly rooted much more firmly in the earliest documented history of V1-conditionals in English than expected under the Asynchronicity Assumption. Indeed, even V1-conditionals expressing neutrality in Old English are sharply distinct from interrogatives in that the protasis is not in

the present indicative but in the present subjunctive.⁹ *Fulga* in (20a) above illustrates this in an Old English V1-conditional with a neutrality reading, and (21) is an example with a double protasis:

- (21) Hæbbe se mann heardheortnysse. and ungewyldelic mod. and næbbe
 ða soðan lufe and anrædnysse. Þonne ...
 lit.: ‘*Have man hard-heartedness and an unbridled spirit, and have he*
not genuine love and steadfastness, then ...’
 (YCOE: Ælfric’s Homilies)

The presence of the subjunctive in V1-conditionals is not due to a general pattern in conditionals in Old English, as only 24% of neutrality conditionals with *gif* are in the subjunctive in Van den Nest’s (2010) data. Nor is there a corresponding pattern during the same (or indeed any other) period in German V1-conditionals, which in Old High German has the past subjunctive for non-neutrality as in (22a), and for neutrality normally the indicative as in (22b) and only in a small minority of 3.5% of cases the present subjunctive as in (22c) (examples from Van den Nest 2010, pp. 225, 228):

- (22) a. “Drúhtin”, quad si, “*quamist* thu ér, \ wir ni thúltin thiz sér”
 (Otfrid)

⁹ 16 out of the 28 V1-conditionals in the YCOE are in the present and 12 in the past; out of the 16 tokens in the present, 15 are unambiguously in the subjunctive and one is morphologically ambiguous.

“‘Lord”, she said, “*had you come* (lit.: *came you*) *earlier*, we would not be enduring this pain”

- b. *Strîtet* man úmbe réht. únde úmbe únréht. sô man in dînge tûot. tíu sláhta strîtes. héizet latine fône iudicio iudicialis. (Notker)

‘If one fights (lit.: *Fights one*) over right and wrong, as one does in legal procedures, the kind of fight is called *iudico iudicialis* in Latin.’

- c. *Sî* si dir gelóub. trág íro síte. (Notker)

‘If she is (lit.: *Be she*) acceptable to you, support her inherent quality.’

Finally, Old English V1-protases are also attested far more frequently in sentence-final position in Old English than in Old High German, a clear symptom of grammaticalization (Van den Nest 2010, p. 281f. from texts in the YCOE):

- (23) a. And mid ealle midson, *gewyrðe* hit oftor.

‘And all people fail if it happens (lit.: *happen it*) more often’.

- b. ne bið hit naht *beo* ðær ænig twewonung.

‘It would be worthless, were (lit.: *be*) there any doubt.’

Whereas in Old High German, only 8.4% of protases are sentence-final, no less than 42.9% are sentence-final in Old English (Van den Nest 2010, p. 325). Somewhat paradoxically, V1-conditionals in Old English are therefore much rarer than in Old High German, while also showing stronger signs of grammaticalization. Despite shared trends in the later development of V1-conditionals, the sharp distinction between V1-conditionals in present-day English and German cannot be reconciled with shared

interrogative origins under the Asynchronicity Assumption. An alternative account of the origins of V1-protases seems therefore called for.

4. Revisiting the Origins: From V1-Declarative to Emergent V1 Order

It may often seem otherwise, but the interrogative-based account of V1-conditionals is not the only one in the literature. According to an alternative view which was first put forward by Erdmann (1886, p. 188f.), V1-protases arose, not from interrogatives, but from declaratives with V1 order of the type that is still used at the beginning of jokes and other specific text types in present-day German and other Germanic languages (Önnerfors 1997). As an historical account of V1-conditionals, the Erdmann tradition was kept alive in Nordic linguistics by authors like de Boor (1922, pp. 97–99, 106–108), Rieger (1968, pp. 133–135) and Wessén ([1956] 1970, pp. 253–268), in part because a major source of ancient Scandinavian prose, the Old Swedish land laws, contain numerous V1-conditionals like (24):

- (24) *hængir klocka i kirkiu, faldær i hovod mannæ, böti sopn firi* (cited in Hopper 1975, p. 50)
lit.: ‘*Hangs (a) bell in a church, [and] falls (it) on someone’s head, may the parish pay.*’

On the basis of this tradition, Hopper (1975, p. 51) proposes that V1-protases in ancient Germanic originated from “series of statements such that

the prior ones [i.e. the proto-protases] describe a situation and the posterior ones [i.e. the proto-apodoses] draw a conclusion from it” (similarly Wunder 1965, p. 142f. with reference to the Old High German of Otfrid). On this view, the protasis in examples like (24), and also many of the historical German and English examples cited above, should be read as a V1-declarative rather than as a polar interrogative.

There seem to be two different ways ahead for this theory. One is to try and model the transition from V1-declaratives to V1-protases, which is accounted for so elegantly and intuitively in the interrogative-based scenario (3), on the basis of typical functions of V1-declaratives. According to Lenerz (1984, p. 153), V1 order was used as a rhematizing strategy, i.e. as a way of removing a constituent from the thematic position before the verb. A typical context were presentational sentences (cited from Petrova and Solf 2008, p. 332):

- (25) a. *sind eac sume steorran leoht-beamde* (Old English: Ælfric’s Homilies I, 610, 1–2)
‘[there] are also light-emitting stars’
- b. *uuas thar ouh sum uuita / in thero burgi* (Old High German: Tatian 210, 2)
‘was there also a widow in that town’

Such V1-declaratives were mostly (though not always) exclusively rhematic, i.e.thetic, and according to Lenerz, this could have given rise to the impression that the status of the proposition as common ground was at

issue between speaker and hearer (1984, p. 153); V1-sentences could thus have implicated, first conversationally, then conventionally, that they were expressing hypothetical conditions for subsequent assertions (ibid.). Any exclusivelythetic status of V1-declaratives was later denied by Petrova and Solf (2008, inter alia), who pointed out that V1-declaratives often contained substantial thematic material in both Old English and Old High German and that such categorical (i.e. non-thetic) V1-declaratives were typically used at the start of fresh episodes to carry forward the action and introduce new discourse referents, often with verbs of telic motion or saying (quoted from Petrova and Solf 2008, pp. 337, 332):

- (26) a. *Com þa to lande lidmanna helm* (Old English: Beowulf 1623)
‘Approached then the shore the protector of the sailors.’
- b. *Bigonda ther phariseus innan imo / ahtonti queden* (Old High German: Tatian 126, 4–5)
‘Began the Pharisee to speak to himself.’

According to Van den Nest (2010, p. 325), however, a reanalysis of V1 clauses as expressions of conditional antecedents for the subsequent stretch of discourse may still have taken place under these circumstances in Proto-Germanic, helped along by theticity (under Lenerz’s account) as a contributing factor. Once this had taken place, the individual languages went their separate ways: in Old English, V1-conditionals diverged quickly while also remaining niche-bound and rare; Old High German V1-

conditionals became associated more closely with interrogatives and grammaticalized more slowly, only gradually diverging and specializing for non-neutrality (*ibid.*).

As Van den Nest admits (*ibid.*), this account remains essentially speculative, and any alternative theories are unlikely to fundamentally change this situation. The other way forward for the declarative scenario is therefore to shift the burden of proof: rather than assume a false choice between interrogative and declarative origins, an elegant alternative (following Fleischmann 1972, pp. 227–230) is to treat the V1 order itself as emergent. Word-order in ancient Germanic was determined pragmatically rather than syntactically, and as we saw, V1 was being used for various underspecified but always somehow ‘marked’ functions with respect to the subsequent discourse, fromthetic statements through special kinds of assertions involving new discourse referents at the beginning of new narrative episodes to interrogativity and conditionality. At the same time, V1 was receding as a word-order option in declaratives (Hinterhölzl and Petrova 2010; Szczepaniak 2013, p. 743 on German, with figures and references). In the changing ecology of word-order options, V1 was thus able to emerge as a residual grammatical marker for specific non-assertive functions like interrogativity and conditionality.

Apart from being internally more consistent and avoiding overcategorization, this approach has the added advantage of drawing attention to the diverging systemic context in which V1-conditionals

emerged. According to Hinterhölzl and Petrova (2010), there were always subtle differences in the way various word-order options corresponded to information-structural distinctions in ancient Germanic (*ibid.*, pp. 322–324); as a result, different default word orders were generalized in declarative clauses in different languages (*cf.* also Hinterhölzl 2014). In German, V2 became the default word order in declaratives in paradigmatic opposition to V1 for interrogatives (and VE for prototypical subordinate clauses), whereas in English, V2 was by-passed in favour of SVO as the standard word-order for all clause-types, and any productive opposition to V1 failed to develop. It therefore seems plausible (following a suggestion by Hawkins 1986, pp. 195–213) to regard the premature niche existence of English V1-conditionals as an early symptom of the low productivity of V1 that is in sharp contrast to the productivity of V1 in its paradigmatic opposition to V2 and VE in German.

5. Summary and Conclusions

Contrary to initial expectations, our investigation has tended to emphasize the methodological distinction between synchrony and diachrony in studying the emergence and grammaticalization of question-driven patterns of fictive interaction. In contrast to their German counterparts, V1-conditionals in English turned out not to be synchronically emergent and to

have occupied a restrictive (and partly narrowing) functional niche from the very start of their attested history. A solution was therefore proposed that treated not just whole conditional constructions as emergent but also V1 itself. Under this approach, V1 in ancient Germanic was a pragmatically determined, functionally underspecified word-order option associated with diverse ‘marked’ discourse functions, including some non-assertive ones. As V2 (or VE in subordinate clauses) and SVO emerged as the standard word-orders in German and English, respectively, V1 order was left with, *inter alia*, a residual function to mark conditional protases.

With regard to fictive interaction, this account amounts to a partial loss: although the rise of V1-conditionals could have been a textbook case of grammaticalization from question-driven fictive interaction, it turns out in fact to be an optical illusion which is based, not on any linear evolution of V1-protases out of ready-made polar interrogatives, but at least in part on a later re-motivation. On the positive side, we gain a more realistic picture of the history of V1-conditionals and of the systemic and cultural conditions of their emergence. As emphasized by Hopper (1992, p. 219), apparent ‘sentences’ in ancient Germanic are often best described, not as syntactic units, but as clusters of quasi-formulaic building-blocks for discourses. As such,

they call into question attempts to characterize syntactic change in terms of ‘Sentences’ [sic], and suggest instead that it might be more profitable to study

syntax (both synchronic and diachronic) from the perspective of textuality rather than from the perspective of transcendent structure. (ibid.)

V1-conditionals underscore this point in two respects. On the one hand, they emphasize the systemic embedding of word-order patterns and the long way that adverbial clause constructions generally had to come in order to form the relatively compact sentential units we know today – a process which V1-conditionals, as we saw above, are still undergoing in German as we speak. On the other hand, the early history of V1-conditionals emphasizes the change of perspective required by the historical study of syntax from a functional point of view (cf. Stolt 1990; Betten 1992; Kuzmenko 1996). Discussing the role of V1 order in Old Icelandic prose, Kuzmenko (ibid, pp. 150–153) stresses the difference with the modern state of affairs, in which V1 order is a syntactic means linking clauses within the syntactic framework of the sentence. In ancient Germanic, by contrast, V1 apparently marked a type of functionally underspecified clausal building block which could be routinely deployed as part of supra-clausal, semantically determined, syntactically flexible units of discourse called “periods” (ibid.; cf. Petrova and Solf 2008 and Donhauser et al. 2006 for comparative discussion, and further Stolt 1990). While “period” is a rhetorical concept rooted in spoken and ultimately conversation-framed settings, it remains a unit of monologic discourse.

In summary, modern V1-conditionals did not grammaticalize from a question-driven fictive interaction sequence, as implied by (3), but from a monologic, period-like pattern, and the sharp distinction between V1-conditionals in present-day (and to a significant extent also older) English and German is linked directly to the different ways in which V1 emerged as a marker of conditionality in view of the divergent evolution of word-order systems in both languages.

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